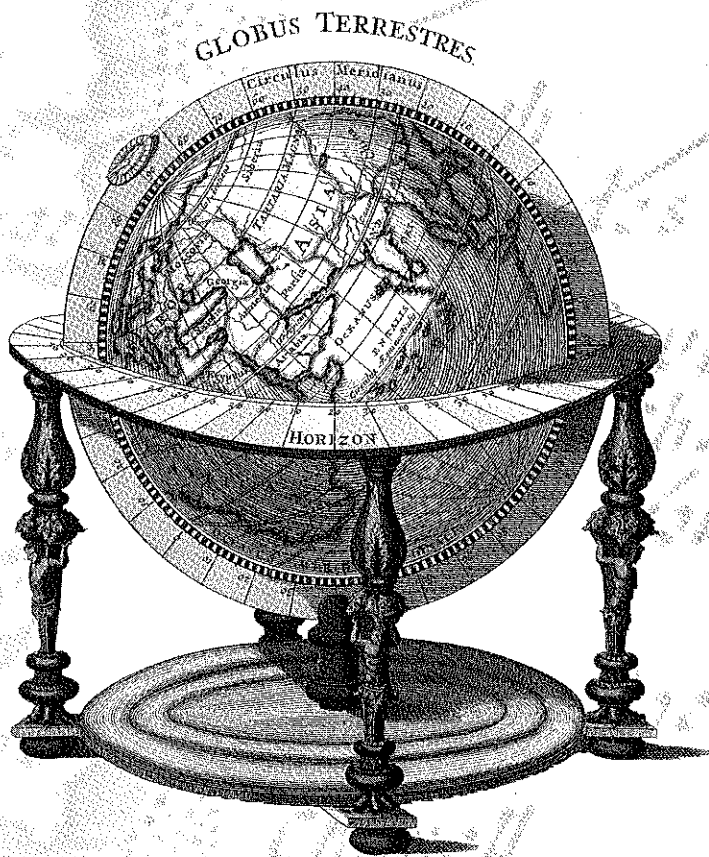


the  
**GREAT  
WORLD  
MAGIC  
SHOW**



Jeff McBride can do more with a single playing card than most magicians can with a ton of equipment. Of course, McBride doesn't produce a single playing card. He produces a thousand. Or so it would seem.

McBride's wonders comprised the second half of *The Great World Magic Show*, held on June 22 in the 1400-seat Hayes Auditorium at Mount St. Vincent College in Riverdale, New York. The pastoral campus provided an enchanting site for the show and the week-long Mystery School which preceded it. Performers volunteered their time to raise money for the Mount St. Vincent Alumni Association, which will use the funds for a campus beautification project. 400 spectators—most of whom purchased VIP tickets at \$30 each—ensured the success of the fund raiser.

McBride opened with his trademark mask manipulations and stunning card productions featured on *The World's Greatest Magic II* television special. McBride is pure magic, a kaleidoscope of color, movement and energy. Though every move has been carefully choreographed, McBride imbues each effect with wonder. His performance is reminiscent of those of Cardini—flawless manipulation combined with theatrical direction. The result is beautiful, funny, fascinating, and frightening. McBride doesn't simply perform, he entertains, holding the audience rapt in each new movement.

McBride also did some paper magic, additional mask manipulations, Linking Rings (featuring the magician dressed as a samurai) and the Miser's Dream. Each routine seized spectators from the outset. For example, the mask manipulations began with a costumed assistant holding a large mirror. Standing in a spotlight, the assistant slowly rotated the mirror, which focused and reflected the beam into the audience. This eerie, dramatic image drew the audience into the surrealistic skit that followed. By contrast, McBride introduced the Miser's Dream—his closing effect—in a remarkably understated way. The performer strolled across the stage striking a metal canister with a wand. He rushed into the audience with a second wand, allowing audience members to try their hand at the canister. Though McBride produced loud clanging sounds, spectators' attempts yielded unsatisfying thuds. That is, of course, until McBride located his volunteer for the Miser's Dream—the magician used the ruse of gradually withdrawing the canister to lead the boy onto the stage. His Miser's Dream proved worthy of Al Flosso, except that McBride squeezed all the wonder and humor out of the routine without speaking a word.

The program at *The Great World Magic Show* included three women—a fact about which McBride is justifiably proud. Luna Shemada opened the evening with her beautiful parasol productions and deft handling of fire, paper and silks, all synchronized to music. Margaret Steele offered an interesting production of large loads of silks and tissue flowers from a paper cone. The routine, derived from a historical act researched by Steele with the assistance of Eugene Burger, unites dance, classical music and magic. Burger, the Dean of the Mystery School, acted as emcee, lectured on the philosophy of magic, and performed a paper hat tear and several card effects.

Scott Hitchcock, who just returned from the Monte Carlo championships and a command performance for Prince Rainier, demonstrated fire eating with flair and flourishes. Bob Fellows, a talented illusionist and escape artist, amazed the crowd with a mentalism act rarely performed for magicians. Moving around the audience, Fellows made seemingly audacious divinations, which included "reading" the names of pets owned by several spectators. Card and book tests filled out the routine.

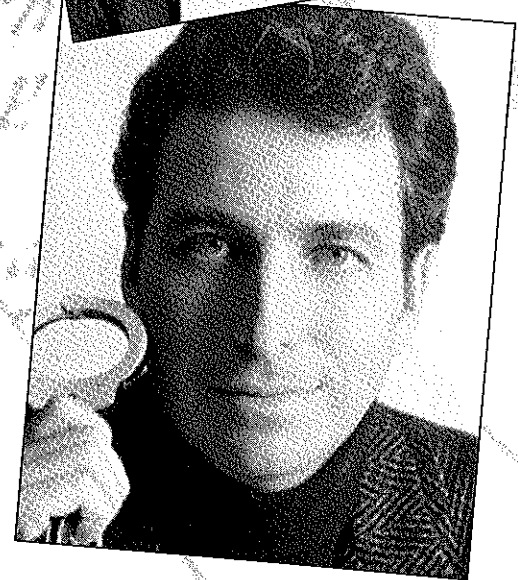
The first act ended with Jennifer Adams (daughter of magician Jack Adams) and Steven Vincent of *The Incredible Merlin Magic Show*. A wizened conjurer and a hooded assistant demonstrated several small, ancient effects. The assistant suddenly raised a cloth in front of the wizard. The assistant dropped the cloth, revealing the true identity of the "old man"—Adams appeared in a flash, sporting long, flowing hair and a modern pin-stripe suit.

As her assistant retreated to the wings, Adams lit a cigarette, donned a pair of sunglasses, and strolled across the stage. Her style and attitude flooded across the footlights. "Wow!" observed Marina Obermaier, a spectator, "She's fun to watch!" The curtains opened—the assistant had become Vincent, a striking bearded figure in his black, fringed costume. Adams and Vincent, who are married, continued with a slick adaptation of *Metamorphosis*, which featured some amusing byplay with a pair of handcuffs, and ended with another quick-change.

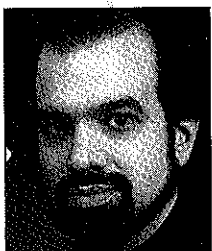
Before the show, Adams and Vincent warmed up the crowd with a ballyhoo act performed on the steps of the Hayes Auditorium. The team demonstrated the Torch Through Arm and a version of the Head Twister. (Vincent, an accomplished illusion builder, constructed the Head Twister as well as some of the props used by McBride). Drawing on their experience working Renaissance fairs, Adams and Vincent adopted accents for the ballyhoo act. "The ballyhoo act was a kind of vaudeville comedy shuck with Shakespearean overtones," explained magic aficionado Richard Cohn. "It was very entertaining."

*The Great World Magic Show* offered little room for criticism. The program featured too many silent acts—Fellows and Burger were the only performers to speak during the show. This was a mistake, as the silent acts by some of the younger performers paled by comparison to McBride's command of mime and music. In addition, several of the acts had problems with angle-proofing, which exposed some moves and gimmicks to those seated in the auditorium's side sections. But these factors did little to tarnish this splendid evening.

Moreover, *The Great World Magic Show* proved an excellent demonstration of the philosophy underlying Mystery School, now in its sixth year. "Mystery School is an experiential retreat for the serious study of the magical arts," Tobias Beckwith, the show's producer, explained. "It is an attempt to provide magicians with a magical experience, which they can, in turn, share with others." This principle became patent as *The Great World Magic Show* unfolded. Whether it was McBride holding the audience spellbound by simply banging on a pot, Burger using his low-key wit to draw chuckles from the crowd, or Adams exuding charm while strutting across the stage, one thing became clear: It's not what you do, but how you do it. ★



Pictured top to bottom:  
Jeff McBride, Jennifer Adams and Stephen Vincent, Bob Fellows



Gary R. Brown (at left) is a freelance writer and magic historian, and a regular contributor to *GENII*. His articles about magicians and related subjects have appeared in magazines in the United States, Europe and Australia, and on the World Wide Web. He can be reached at [gbrown@tribeca.ios.com](mailto:gbrown@tribeca.ios.com)

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A Report by Gary R. Brown